

EDGES OF THE FOREST

Laureate of La Bourse Brouillon d'un rêve de la SCAM ✱

A documentary project
by Gaspard Renault



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PITCH

As a highway construction project forces him to relocate the primate sanctuary where he grew up, a young Bolivian ponders his life choices: answer the siren call of a cosmopolitan urban life, or fully embrace his commitment to protecting monkeys and the rainforest.

Under the patronage of The Jane Goodall Institute

This film will spread a very important message about our relationship with living beings. It points to the damage done to the environment, and sends us a message of hope: that we can turn things around.

Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE

Founder of the Jane Goodall Institute

United Nations Messenger of Peace



Jane Goodall Institute
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SUMMARY

At the age of 25, Rusber is at a new crossroads in his life. From orphan and street child, he has become an indispensable member of a small primate sanctuary in Bolivia, where Nena, a local conservationist, adopted him when he was eight. This is where he grew up, among monkeys, happily calling them his brothers and sisters.

But in front of the shelter, what was once a two-lane road is about to become one of Bolivia's largest highway. So, to escape the urban bustle that threatens the animals' tranquillity, Nena has decided to move to the other side of the country, where a new and promising land awaits them.

While helping to relocate the only family he's ever really known, Rusber tries to finish his last year of veterinary studies, so he can finally graduate and go traveling, like the shelter's volunteers and his girlfriend in France. But in town, old acquaintances confront him with Bolivia's economic realities and visions of the veterinary profession in total opposition to his convictions. Above all, the forest fires scorching the country and Nena's weariness as she faces their consequences remind him of the urgency and necessity of his preparation to step in as the shelter's new leader.

So, between the shelter's relocation and the end of his studies, his loyalty to Nena and his wanderlust, it's with everything that paves his path to adulthood that Rusber will have to find the measure of his commitment to the monkeys and the rainforest.



AUTHOR'S INTENTIONS

The film project whose genesis I trace here aims to accompany Rusber as the primate sanctuary where he was adopted and raised has to be completely re-located, and as his commitment to the protection of living beings comes into friction with all the personal aspirations that a twenty-five-year-old Bolivian can have.

FIRST STEPS

I met Rusber in 2016, at the dawn of an ethnographic investigation in Machia, a small monkey sanctuary and headquarters of one of Bolivia's most important biodiversity conservation NGOs. It was there, on the edges of the rainforest and one of the country's busiest roads, that I first spotted this discreet young man, whose dimpled smile and small stature give him an almost childlike air. One evening, in front of the old wooden table in the café where the shelter's convivial life is concentrated, I watch him listen to the international volunteers who, like me, are discovering his world. Despite the repetitive nature of the anecdotes and questions Rusber surely hears from each new volunteer, he listens to each one with the same sincere interest. He rarely speaks, and when he does, it's to provide a welcome key to understanding the monkeys' attitudes, mimics and sounds, which would otherwise remain mysterious and opaque. The next day, as I learn that he's gone back to the city to study veterinary medicine, it is Nena, the shelter's director, who gives me the first outline of Rusber's story: a street child, she adopted him when he was eight and has

since raised him in this strange home she founded herself.

Upon his return, I get to know Rusber a little better through his job as caretaker and, from my inexperience, I can only admire his ease. While I have to be constantly vigilant to avoid having my carefully prepared portions of food snatched from me, Rusber fearlessly navigates the hordes of cunning capuchins that populate the premises. Where others risk losing a finger, if not more, he seems to enjoy a privileged position with even the most sensitive primates. So, when Villa gets tangled up, it is Rusber who's called in to climb the tree-tops and rescue this big, awkward atele male. When it comes to administering Negra's heart medication, he's the only one who knows how to outsmart the shelter's simian dean. His body language, his ability to communicate with animals and the trust they place in him, everything about Rusber seems to confirm Nena's words, when she tenderly refers to him as a contemporary Mowgli.

BETWEEN CONFINEMENT AND ATTACHMENT : THE SHELTER'S PARADOX

Our friendship and the first possibilities of a film gradually took root on this small patch of 35 hectares of forest dedicated to relieving the physical and psychological wounds of primates rescued from international illegal trafficking. It's a hybrid universe, where cages seem to have sprung up in the middle of tropical vegetation, where the sounds of the road bordering the shelter mingle with those of animal cries and swarms of insects. It's a place where vets and caretakers repeat the same gestures of care in the tropical humidity, in the hope of freeing creatures who have only ever known captivity. Indeed, they all have more or less followed the same path: captured as infants, they are extracted from the forest and then destined to be sold on the clandestine markets of Bolivia's major cities, as pets, circus animals or even sexual objects. Then, if they are not confiscated by the local authorities, they are generally abandoned by owners fed up with animals that have become too cumbersome, costly to care for or dangerous. It is usually at this stage that the shelter intervenes.

Once they have been cut off from the environmental and family ties needed to learn how to live in the wild, releasing these animals back into the forest is an extremely long and uncertain process, requiring a whole range of technical and human resources to enable them to regain their autonomy. However, this objective is more often a utopian dream than a tangible reality.

Indeed, how can we teach a monkey to live as one when it has never learned to be one, and when we ourselves have only a partial idea of what really makes a monkey? How can we teach them to move, feed and communicate with each other when we don't share the same physiological and cognitive baggage? In short, how can we restore to these deeply marked animals all the complexity and subtlety of an existence that is largely foreign to us?

Under these conditions, I quickly realize that the shelter is mainly a place for

animals who, for the most part, will remain dependent for the rest of their lives on the humans who care of them.

So, instead of being a place of liberation, the shelter appeared to me as a means of attachment between species.

Workers feed and care for the monkeys, getting to know them in the process. The animals are named, and their stories and personalities are brought to the fore, sometimes even merging with those of humans. Although they can't be said to be free, within the shelter and for those who care for them, they are no longer just capuchin or spider monkeys, but become individuals in their own right, with whom new forms of being together can grow.

This impossible return to the wild and the resulting bonds of attachment are the starting point for my film. I wanted to tell the story of this place and of these animals because, on the scale of a microcosm, they reveal the consequences of a larger relationship with living beings that transformed them into resources or objects of entertainment, leaving a trail of damaged trajectories on the side of the road. They also reveal the contradictions of an ecological utopia that is all too often powerless in the face of these ruins.

From then on, the paradoxical idea of a universe that protects as much as it encloses will nourish my entire approach and my comments, as it crystallizes the shelter's very essence, its identity, its raison d'être, and feeds the doubts of those who bring it to life on a daily basis.



A FAMILY BONDED BY SHARED COMMITMENT AND HARDSHIP

At first, I thought of staging this challenge by focusing on Nena. At first glance, she has everything it takes to embody the heroine of a film set in an animal sanctuary and the history of the country in which she was born and has spent her entire life. The daughter of a Marxist revolutionary close to Guevara, she was seventeen when she began to care about the fate of mutilated monkeys, chained to make bar patrons laugh or decorate houses. It was when she met the eyes of a female atele abandoned by its owners that she says she had a revelation and decided to devote her life to these animals.

Despite the incomprehension and rejection of her parents, she left La Paz and her biology studies behind, to go to the Chapare, a small tropical province in the Andean foothills, and create the country's very first primate sanctuary, the headquarters of an organization for which she sacrificed everything else: free time, love, sexuality.

Thirty years on, although she has never had any biological children of her own, she continues to act as an adoptive mother to several hundred primates, whom she likes to call her "wawas" (Bolivian slang for babies). She also has to deal with the harsh realities of her job, and accept the fact that most of the animals she rescues will never regain the means of self-sufficiency. In the end, this is her life's great tragedy: rescuing monkeys from one cage, only to put them back in another. But in the face of all this evidence, Nena seems impervious to doubt. She is the keystone on which the shelter's very existence rests, and without whom the whole edifice would surely collapse very quickly.

At nearly fifty years of age, Nena is a woman whose commitment has come to merge entirely with her life. So much so, in fact, that today it's impossible to separate her personal story from that of her NGO. Indeed, Nena never ceases to repeat to any newcomer what brought her there in the first place, and it's clear that the discourse is lurking and eroding for the sake of the cause. Paradoxically, by becoming the ethical guarantor of her organization, her past comes to block any prospect of evolution for Nena. Although, I do want her to be a central character in the film, I quickly realized that she couldn't be the heart of it. **And the more I wanted a character in the making to carry the film, the more I focused on Rusber.**

So, one day as I accompany him into town, I try to find out a little more about the circumstances that brought him to the shelter. "I arrived by pure coincidence," he says, smiling. Then he calmly recalls his parents' alcoholism, his father's abandonment, the accident that killed his mother before his eyes, and his two years of wandering the streets of Cochabamba, the country's third largest city, from the age of six to eight. He talks humorously about the odd

jobs he did to earn enough to eat, and tells me about the day he fell asleep on a bus, only to wake up, amazed to discover the rainforest outside his window. He details his meeting with Nena and his first steps with the monkeys. I listen to the story of his fights with the dominant males in the treetops, the fear he felt at first, and the sense of indebtedness he now feels to those who finally accepted him as one of their own.

Back at the shelter, I finally get the full measure of Rusber's total commitment to the monkeys and to Nena, and what is profoundly important to him in this place. As he himself tells me: "these monkeys are my brothers, their journey mirrors my own". **For Rusber, the bonds of filiation are not so much a matter of consanguinity or species class. Rather, they are a quality acquired through daily trials and the sharing of a common history.** He also embodies the human counterpart of this so-called modernity, with its disastrous social and ecological consequences. Despite this, far from the misanthropy to which animal defenders are often reduced, he repeats, like Nena before him, that we can't take care of animals if we don't take care for humans.

It is now clear to me that, in caring for the apes, Rusber is trying to define his own life, and it's from this quest that the film will draw its dramatic force and thematic universality. This is all the more true as the shelter enters a new phase in its history, at a pivotal moment in Rusber's young adult life.

A PROTAGONIST AT A CROSSROADS

The pandemic forced the university to close its doors, and Rusber was forced to put his studies on hold. Like most of the volunteers, his French girlfriend had to return home, leaving the promise of an eventual return in a fragile long-distance relationship. At the same time, a freeway construction site has continued its inexorable advance towards the shelter, which seems doomed to disappear. Nena has therefore decided to relocate the group to the other side of the country, where a plot of land has been purchased thanks to donations from volunteers. Since the announcement, Rusber has been working full-time in the shelter to make up for the lack of manpower required for the move.

At the end of 2021, I finally met up with Rusber and Bolivia once more. As I asked about his plans for the future, he told me that he intends to finish his last year of school, get his degree and then go travelling. At the same time, I sense that he's struggling to get away from the monkeys and Nena, who's calling on him more and more each day to cope with the accumulation of problems weighing on his organization. And as usual, Rusber puts them first. The rest, he'll see later.

However, behind his smile and nonchalance, I sense that the upheaval ahead is troubling him, and that he is gradually becoming aware of the choices he now has to make. The university has reopened and classes have resumed. The first group of monkeys has been relocated, and Rusber was part of the journey. As the only person in a position to manage the group's adaptation to such a change, he will have to spend the next few months working closely with the monkeys to establish a new routine, so that others after him can take over. Then he'll have to leave the forest and the monkeys behind him, cross the country and return to the city and the university.

It is precisely at this crossroads - at a moment in his life when the world he knows is undergoing radical upheaval and essential questions for the future are being asked - that the film will begin to reveal the delicate edges that link Rusber to the forest, to his adoptive mother, and to a species that, while not his own, has so far enabled him to grow up in the human world.





NARRATIVE APPROACH

BETWEEN CITIES AND SHELTERS

When Nena and her first fellow travelers arrived in Machia in 1995, the 35 hectares on which they were creating the shelter had just been declared a natural park by the municipality of Villa Tunari, the small trading town just across the river. At the time, the environmentalists were granted the right to occupy certain areas of the park to care for the animals without being disturbed by outside visitors. The local government's recently reinforced desire to open up the rehabilitation areas to tourists, and the forthcoming expansion of the road that passes right in front of the shelter have finally convinced Nena to abandon her organization's historic headquarters, as well as her home, and move the animals away from the urban hustle and bustle of Villa Tunari.

Jacj Cuisi, the new shelter, is located at the other end of the country, over a thousand kilometers away. From Machia, it takes at least two days to reach the nearest town, Rurrenabaque, on roads that are often impassable. From there, in 2017, it was still necessary to cross the Beni River by dugout canoe from one bank to the other, then take a forty-minute track to reach the new shelter's four hundred hectares of forest. Meanwhile, Chinese construction companies have completed the bridge over the river, facilitating access for timber collectors and Spanish and Brazilian oil companies that have begun exploring their concessions in Madidi National Park, one of the world's largest biodiversity reserves, which borders the shelter.

From Machia to Jacj Cuisi, Nena and Rusber have to organize the relocation of around one hundred and fifty capuchin and spider monkeys, divided into several groups. Prior to moving each group, the infrastructure needed to welcome them to Jacj Cuisi has to be financed and built from scratch. **But by placing the stakes of this move at the heart of the narrative, I'm not trying to give an account of it, it's an evolution that I want to draw, that of Rusber.**

For him, leaving Machia means leaving the home where Nena adopted and cared for him after the death of his biological mother and two years living in the streets. Jacj Cuisi is seen as a new beginning, for the time being away from the urban unrest that forced Nena to abandon her organization's headquarters and her home. But having already lived through it, she knows more than anyone else the ordeal of such an exile and the difficulty of having to rebuild everything. And after more than thirty years of commitment, she is beginning to show signs of fatigue. She is relying more and more on Rusber to organize the transport and installation of the animals. **So, without being officially announced, the move is also in some way a handover between Nena and Rusber.**

But as he tries to complete his studies in Cochabamba, a city two days' journey from Jacj Cuisi, and dreams of discovering the world beyond Bolivia's borders, Nena's dependence on him also begins to appear as an obstacle to his emancipation.

The fact that he finds himself at a turning point in his life as a young adult, and that the question of his total commitment as heir to Nena's project arises, is expressed through the back-and-forth trips he makes between the two shelters and the cities where he goes to attend classes, buy equipment, visit friends, or party on his weekly day off. These journeys give the film a pendulum-like motion, contributing to the general feeling that Rusber oscillates between several worlds.

RUSBER FACES HIS QUESTIONS

This journey, at once concrete and interior, between cities and shelters, is also an opportunity for Rusber to express himself intimately, through the encounters he makes.

Nena

Nena arrives gradually in the story. At first, she'll appear in her role as the shelter's director. When I asked her to make a documentary about its relocation, she immediately agreed. I think my desire to make a film met with her desire to keep a record of her home before she left it. However, to approach her past, it's essential to bypass the official discourse, which would risk distancing us from her and the strength of her story. And if there's one person with whom Nena is not in a state of communicative control, it's with Rusber. And all the

more so as he is now faced with choices that she herself has had to make.

So, it's through her role as adoptive mother and the advice she can give Rusber that we will get to know Nena more intimately. This aspect of their relationship will unfold in the shelter's various spaces, during dinners with friends, and even in the kitchen of their little house, the only place where they are ever alone. Well aware of the immense affection that binds them, but also of their modesty, we'll be attentive to the discreet but very real signs between people who are familiar with each other, but maintain a certain distance: smiles, glances, silences too, like those naturally shared by accomplices whose attachment is visible beyond words.

Fabio, Boris & Beltran

Beltran was Machia's veterinarian for several years and met his wife Elena there. Today they live with their two children in La Paz, where Beltran works at the zoo. Fabio and Boris were both at university with Rusber before the pandemic interrupted their studies. Since then, after an internship in Machia, Fabio has managed to complete his studies and opened a pet clinic in Cochabamba. What Fabio and Beltran have in common is that they both lived at the shelter and chose to leave it for other horizons more conducive to family life, or economically more advantageous. However, this emancipation has been achieved through professional orientations whose ethics are at odds with Rusber's convictions. As for Boris, he has interrupted his studies for good to support his two-year-old daughter, and he and his wife hope to emigrate to Spain.

In contrast to Nena's trajectory, these three people, with whom Rusber maintains strong ties of friendship, open up different perspectives to the one that awaits him at the shelter. They also shed light on the preoccupations of Bolivia's urban youth, who have to come to terms with the country's economic situation in order to think about their future. Through meetings and discussions with them, Rusber will once again be confronted with the strengths and limits of his own commitment.

Volunteers & Eve

The volunteer's mobility contrasts with Rusber's. They come and go with the seasons, mainly from Europe and the United States. Some stay for a few weeks, others have been in Bolivia for several years or return regularly. Rusber has grown up with them, just as he did with the monkeys, adopting their social codes, their way of speaking and dressing. But whereas for the volunteers, the experience of the shelter and of working with the animals can sometimes be seen as a leisure activity with a limited time horizon, for Rusber it is part of a daily routine and a social identity from which he can hardly escape.

It was also among the volunteers that Rusber experienced his first romances and heartbreaks. With his childlike face and a kind of fragility that stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical macho South American, Rusber has always had a certain charm with foreign volunteers. All the more so as his special relationship with the monkeys gives him an edge in the seduction games that the shelter's atmosphere - sometimes similar to that of a youth hostel - encourages. This doesn't mean he's a philandering Don Juan. On the contrary, he'd like to settle into a long-term relationship. But each time, when the end of their stay arrives, Rusber watches helplessly as the women he has accompanied in their discovery of the forest and its animals move on to other horizons. Since his adolescence, Rusber's love education has been based on relationships as intense as they are ephemeral, and lived to the rhythm of the volunteers comings and goings, and he only knows love under the threat of an inevitable departure.

But last summer, for the first time, his French girlfriend Eve came back to visit him in Bolivia, and they've been in regular contact ever since. There's something new emerging for Rusber in this long-distance relationship, as it gives him a glimpse of the possibility of lasting love. Through their telephone conversations and the voice messages they exchange, which Rusber listens to alone, we'll be questioning the conditions of such a prospect.

I thus see the volunteers and Eve as a single character with a dual function. On the one hand, they serve, by contrast, to underline Rusber's expertise, when he explains certain monkey behaviors to them, or teaches them the tricks of the caretaker's trade. On the other hand, they open a window onto a lifestyle, a socio-economic status, to which he will certainly never have access if he decides to devote his life to animals, and which can make him doubt his choice.

The challenge here is to make the viewer feel that between Rusber and the volunteers, it's both the same world, that of a globalized youth, and the abyssal gap between North and South. At dinners and parties, we will pick up snippets of discussion about the volunteers' travels, which Rusber listens to avidly, without really being able to take part in. He and they get closer, touching, flirting and joking together, but at some point Rusber finds himself alone in a party that's taking place in the background.

TREATMENT ELEMENTS

The narrative proposed below is in part constructed from recollections of moments experienced between 2016 and 2020, during my ethnographic investigation. Other segments are substantial transcriptions of moments spent during two scouting sessions, in December 2021 in Machia, during preparations for the relocation of a first group of monkeys, and in February 2023, in Cochabamba and in Machia.

The proposed sequences are thus all based on real-life situations that have happened or that can be provoked. Without being exhaustive, their arrangement is to be taken as a plausible proposal for narrative progression, which nevertheless remains likely to evolve according to reality and production conditions. The whole is not, therefore, a treatment in the strict sense of the word, but rather the dotted narrative of a hypothetical film: a discontinuous chain of real or hoped-for sequences, with gaps yet to be filled.



-OPENING -

A young man in his twenties crosses the busy streets of a South American city, hurrying up an avenue teeming with colorful cars and buses.

He weaves his way through the mass of vehicles clogging a crossroads, past the lines of stalls and street vendors lining the sidewalk, and reaches the small table serving as a sales office for a transport union. There, he buys a ticket, then waits for the minibus to fill up and leave.

Sitting in the back, wedged between the window and a cholita (Bolivian peasant woman), he watches the streets of the suburbs go by on the other side of the window, while the car radio crackles the nasal voice of a popular singer in the cabin.

As the sunlight fades, the vehicle leaves the urban landscape behind and, threading its way through the trucks, descends the last Andean foothills covered in imposing tropical vegetation.

Night had fallen some time before the minibus pulled up in front of a decrepit building. As it drives off, it sweeps its headlights across a facade covered in paintings of wild animals, leaving the young man with only the song of insects and the shadows of the forest for companions.



- ACTE I: THE LAST SHELTER -

Léo

As is the case every afternoon during the rainy season, torrents of water began to fall and the humidity rising from the ground enveloped the forest in mist.

The spider monkeys hurry down from the highest branches, sliding along the ropes stretched between the trees as if on zip-lines, to take refuge under the shelters scattered here and there around the clearing.

Sitting inside the enclosure set up as a workshop, Nena and Rusber listen to a volunteer report on the monkeys' morning in broken Spanish. It's been three days since Leo was last seen in the area, and it's highly likely that he has once again gone to join a group of wild monkeys whose territory borders that of those undergoing rehabilitation.

Nena worries that Leo might not have reappeared on the day of departure. She can't help but put herself in the monkey's shoes if he returned and the rest of the group had left. She projects her own distress and grief onto the animal, imagining herself abandoned by her family.

Behind his silence, Rusber also struggles to hide his concern for Leo.

A horizon full of hope

When night falls, all the workers gather in front of the shelter's café. As is the custom, the arrival or departure of new volunteers is an opportunity to gather the community around the old wooden table, and for Nena to thank all those who, year after year, come to help the animals and her organization. With Rusber by her side to translate, the speech is well-rehearsed, but the feeling of gratitude expressed by Nena is just as sincere. All the more so as, between the pandemic, the forest fires and now the widening of the road that passes just a few yards away, each year brings its own challenges.

"Welcome to Bolivia!" a vet calls out, triggering general laughter, before Nena finishes by wishing everyone a good evening and reminding them not to make too much noise if the party goes on, so as not to disturb the monkeys sleeping on the other side.

At dinner, Rusber sits opposite a young volunteer with whom he chats. As always, the first question he receives concerns the cages and the possibility of freeing the animals.

Rusber responds with the calm certainty of an expert, backed up by arguments he has repeated countless times. He explains the many factors that prevent the animals from being released.

Aware of the bleak picture he paints of the situation, Rusber tries to make sense of his interlocutor's stay by reminding her that, with a little patience and a lot of attention, she can improve the daily lives of the apes she'll be working with, learn to recognize their different personalities, decipher their language and perhaps gain acceptance from some of them.

Above all," he concludes, "the new refuge represents the hope that one day some of the animals currently in cages will return to the forest.

"What's the name of this refuge?" asks the new girl.

"Jacj Cuisi", replies Rusber, "which means the land of dreams".

On the other side of the main building, high up in the forest, the spider monkeys sleep quietly in the treetops, lulled by the wind and the distant sound of the shelter workers' laughter.

Preparations

A little before 7am, with the sun still struggling to shine over the terrain to the east of the refuge, the volunteers descend one by one along the road, rubber boots on and sleepy-faced.

Rusber is also clearly just out of bed as he crosses the road towards the café.

Breakfast with Nena and the vets is an opportunity to take stock of the main tasks ahead. The priority over the last few weeks has been to prepare the spider monkeys for their journey, and there is still a long list of tasks to be completed before departure: building the wooden transport crates, equipping the enclosures with individual compartments in which the monkeys can be anaesthetized, and above all, training those who are not accustomed to doing so to return to a cage in the evening to sleep.

So as soon as his coffee and toast are swallowed, Rusber heads off to get his gear ready and head up into the forest.

Quarantaine

It's almost dark when Rusber finishes cleaning the freshly concreted floor beneath the capuchin cages. Some have already taken their places in the suspended half-tyres they use as hammocks. Others stare curiously at Rusber as he finishes tidying up.

He stops and crouches down in front of Sterling's cage as he puts his arms through the wire mesh. Rusber takes hold of him gently and strokes the primate's beardless skin, offering him a few words of comfort.

Nena approaches and also crouches down in front of the pen. Rusber asks her if there's really no way of freeing these animals once they've arrived at the new shelter.

Saddened, but certain of her arguments, she replies no, before becoming exasperated as she recalls the volunteers who ask her the same question all the time, which she takes almost as a reproach.

"It's not about liberating for the sake of liberating. It's not that simple", she insists. Then, as if to convince herself once again, she repeats: "for some of these animals, unfortunately, there are no other solutions".

"What do you want us to do?!" she sighs.

Rusber seems unable to come to terms with this and prefers to believe that there is still hope that they will one day rejoin the forest.

Not having the heart to contradict him again, Nena lets him dream of freedom.

The question

When the day's work is done, Rusber and Nena prepare dinner in the company of Benita, the refuge cook, her brother Renaldo and Andrea, the former administrator who has come to help out for the weekend.

Once at the table, Andrea asks Rusber about his intentions regarding his studies. Rusber hesitates, not sure if there's any point in finishing them. He turns to Nena and asks if she regrets leaving university.



“To tell you the truth, no!” replies Nena. She finds that most of her fellow university graduates have ended up living fairly common lives. She remembers her father’s advice to do something exceptional with her life. She therefore prefers to have made the choice of commitment, despite the obstacles she had to overcome and the sacrifices she had to make. She admits that she would have liked to have had children, but that this was incompatible with her life in the refuge. And finally, she thanks God for placing Rusber in her path.

Rusber asks her if she ever thought she’d accomplish all this.

With tears in her eyes, Nena replied that she hadn’t planned to stay in the region for thirty years.

She laughs as she recalls how her father continued to send her money for several months, believing she was still at university.

Negotiations

In the studio, Rusber finishes cutting the aluminum sheets that will be slid under the monkeys’ crates to collect excrement during the trip. In the background, the eyes of a large monkey painted on the wall seem to scrutinize his gestures.

Outside, Nena is pacing back and forth on the phone. She’s talking to the head of a transport union, who tells her that the driver initially scheduled to transfer the monkeys won’t be able to come after all. Dejected, she hangs up, but not before demanding a refund of the deposit she had paid.

Reporting the discussion to Rusber, she explains that the heavy rains of the last few days have made a section of the road impassable, and that the driver doesn’t wish to risk it. She suspects, however, that the weather is just an excuse to get out of their engagement, in favor of another contract.

Rusber asks whether he should initiate the capture of the monkeys anyway, at the risk of having to cancel everything due to lack of transport and the animals not letting themselves be caught the next time.

Nena decides to believe in her lucky star and tells Rusber to get ready. She’ll give him the go-ahead as soon as she’s found an alternative means of transport.

Ève

Rusber is sitting on a wooden bench, his back to the first Andean peaks on the horizon. He's on the phone to his French girlfriend.

They reminisce about the summer they spent traveling together in Bolivia. They reminisce about their visit to the Uyuni salt flat, and laugh as they recount anecdotes from their difficult ascent of Huayna Potosi.

Eve is happy to be doing her second year of veterinary studies in Spain. But she admits to thinking a lot about her time at the refuge, the forest and the animals. "I miss you too," she says suddenly.

Rusber remains silent. He changes the subject and announces that he has decided to go back to school. He thinks it's a shame not to finish, with only one semester left, and reminds himself that the ultimate goal is to be able to help monkeys, other than as a carer.

Eve is delighted to hear the news and congratulates Rusber. She asks him if he has broken the news to Nena.

"Not yet," replies Rusber with a smile.

Ghosts

The departure of the spider monkeys left a void where the group used to live. The enclosures were dismantled and the equipment collected for the new shelter. Nena & Rusber make a final inspection.

Rusber noticed that the big tree on which Octavio had his house had fallen down right where the workshop was. Nena saw this as a sign that it was time to leave.

Both are amazed at how quickly the vegetation has returned. Rusber asks Nena if it wasn't necessary for the old trees to fall so that the young ones could get enough light to grow. She smiles and walks away, distracted by her ringing phone.

Rusber lingers alone for a moment. As he leaves, he takes one last look at the clearing, then disappears into the vegetation.

In the distance, the echo of minibus drivers calling to their passengers rises up from the other side of the river: "Cochabamba, cochabamba, cochabamba!"



- ACT II: OTHER HORIZONS -

Ethics course

Sitting at the back of a classroom, Rusber listens distractedly as the teacher lectures on animal welfare on a cattle farm.

Around him, the other students carefully note down the various instructions to be followed when drawing up a veterinary follow-up protocol.

The teacher reminds us that within each group, all students will have to carry out surgical operations on animals of different sizes. In turn, they will be assessed on their ability to direct and assist their comrades during medical procedures, but above all to ensure collective diagnosis and follow-up of the animals.

As the groups form, Rusber looks out of the window at the trees.

The clinic

Rusber visits Fabio at his new veterinary clinic. While visiting the premises, Rusber checks in on his friend, whom he hasn't seen since he came to the shelter for his internship.

Fabio explains that after the university reopened, he managed to complete his final year and obtain his diploma. After a few short contracts, he was finally able to open his own pet clinic.

Rusber questions his own ability to work with animals other than primates.

Fabio remembers the excitement of working with the monkeys, the atmosphere and the parties at the refuge. He confides that he would have liked to continue in this kind of field, but that opportunities are too rare and salaries too low for him to consider it. Today, even if his job doesn't exactly match his initial vision of the profession, he earns a good enough living to be satisfied with it, and is even considering moving abroad.

Rusber asks him if he's planning to visit Lisa, the French volunteer with whom he's been romantically involved for several months. Fabio replies that he hasn't heard from her for some time, that distance has taken its toll on their relationship.

At the zoo and with the family

Rusber crosses the aisles of a zoo, stopping here and there in front of the animals on display. An old spider monkey catches his eye, and the two exchange a long, silent glance across the glass case that separates them.

Luis, a man in his forties, joins Rusber and, after welcoming him warmly, offers to show him behind the scenes at the zoo.

As they tour the premises, Luis talks about the difficulties he is encountering with the condor reintroduction project he is currently working on.

After the zoo, Rusber meets Luis, his wife and their two children for dinner in their La Paz apartment. Luis and Elena reminisce nostalgically about their meeting at the refuge, and the time they spent working there, he as a vet, she as a biologist, as well as the animals they cared for.

Rusber asks them what motivated them to leave the shelter.

Luis replies that he never imagined he'd be able to raise their children there. Working hours, financial uncertainty and isolation convinced them to move back to the city, even though they miss community life and the monkeys terribly.

Seeing him playing with their children, they ask Rusber if he'd like to have any someday. He replies that he doesn't think too much about it at this stage of his life, but that if he were to have any, he'd like it to be by adoption.

The hope of a comeback

Rusber is alone in a room, his back against a cinderblock wall. Looking nostalgic, he scrolls through photos of the monkeys on his phone.

He receives a voicemail from Eve with news of her studies in Spain. She has passed her exams and validated another year. She tells him she'd like to come and do an internship in Bolivia, if possible at Jacj Cuisi.

His face lit up by the light from his smartphone, Rusber smiles at the thought of her coming back. He records her reply as a voice message. He congratulates her and asks if she's already set dates for her return. Then he tells her that he too will soon have to return to Jacj Cuisi, as Nena is short of workers to look after the spider monkeys and prepare for the arrival of a new group.





- ACT III: THE LAND OF DREAMS -

Miki & Esperanzo

Rays of light shine through the canopy, illuminating the forest and the spider monkeys basking in the sun. Esperanzo, a large male, is being deloused by several females pressing against his back.

Miki stands alone, away from the other members of the group. His face is completely disfigured, and where his nose should be, only two holes remain to allow him to breathe.

Nearby, Rusber and a volunteer are cleaning up food scraps that have fallen to the ground. Keeping an eye on the monkeys' activity, Rusber tells the story of Miki's injuries at the request of his partner.

At the time, Esperanzo had teamed up with another young male to claim the dominant hierarchical position occupied by Miki. So, one day, while Rusber was working in another area of the refuge, the volunteer in charge of the monkey routine called him in panic to tell him that Esperanzo and his accomplice were attacking Miki. Guided by the monkeys' cries, Rusber rushed through the forest. And when he finally found them on the riverbank, Miki was already a bloody wreck.

Rusber reckons that if he hadn't managed to scare Esperanzo off, Miki would almost certainly have died that day. Instead, he spent several weeks in the veterinary clinic, and when he finally recovered from his wounds, he was reintegrated into his group, albeit no longer as leader.

While Rusber and the volunteer finish tidying up, Miki takes advantage of the other monkeys' absence to retrieve the remains of a meal left out.

An invitation

Night has fallen and the trees cast their shadows over the Mirador clearing. Rusber has decided to spend the night there to ensure that the capuchin monkeys can't escape from the enclosures where they were placed following their arrival.

Panicked by this change of environment, the primates shake their enclosures with all their might, biting the fence and trying to open gaps in it with their fingers.

In a soft, reassuring voice, Rusber does his best to calm them down.

Later, he finishes setting up a makeshift bed in the workshop overlooking the clearing. Lying on the bench, he takes out his phone and listens to Eve's latest audio message.

In the end, she won't be able to return to Bolivia. She'll be doing an internship in Argentina, but she offers to pay for his ticket so that he can come and see her when he can.

Rusber remains doubtful. Unsure how to respond, he turns off his phone and turns over on his makeshift bed.

For their part, the capuchins seem to have finally resigned themselves and are sleeping curled up in their hammocks.

Family portrait

Rusber and Nena open the spider monkeys' night pens. As some of them climb out, Negra leaps onto Nena's shoulders and wraps her long limbs around her neck. Nena laughs and leans forward to signal her to come down.

Nena and Rusber make their way through the forest, accompanied by the spider monkeys who follow them, swinging from branch to branch.

They stop and smile as they watch the group blossom freely in the heights all around them.

Arriving at a clearing overlooking the valley below, Nena sits down, visibly tired from her long walk. Negra takes the opportunity to lie on her lap, taking her hands to indicate that she wants to be caressed.

Rusber, smiling, stands leaning against a tree. Lola, the youngest of the group, clumsily climbs down the tree and settles on his shoulder.

Nena recalls the day she saw Rusber, his backpack slung over his shoulder, about to step onto the bridge that crosses the river in front of the shelter. He had just been kicked out by the man who had taken him in, and was about to move back to the city.

He remembers the words Nena spoke that day when she offered him a place to stay at the shelter: “You know, Rusber, maybe I won’t always be able to give you the attention you deserve. There are lots of other orphans here for me to look after. But if you help me and help them, you’ll see that you’ll forget your grief.”

Nena struggles to hold back her tears. She blames herself for asking too much of him, and regrets that he still hasn’t been able to finish his studies.

Rusber comforts her by telling her that she has offered him the opportunity to have a choice.

Above them, spider monkeys bask in the sunlight, facing the horizon.



WRITING AS WE SHOOT

Because Rusber's questions are part of a process that has been underway for several years, I'm confident that, whatever the contingencies of reality, the dramaturgy set out in this dossier will continue its work, at least until the shelter's move is completed. And it promises to be a long process.

However, in a country where the unexpected is the norm, the writing of the film will have to continually adapt to the pace and hazards of Bolivian life, the schedule of an NGO with limited resources, and the consequences that all these elements may have on Rusber's decisions and trajectory. Nevertheless, **it's always the question of his loyalty to Nena, his sense of debt to the apes, and the sideways step he will take, or not, in relation to the cause of animals and shelters that will remain at the heart of this story.**

This narrative arc leads up to a final sequence that has yet to be written, but in which Rusber's choice concerning his future must become clear. Although this outcome is as yet impossible to predict - and that's the beauty of documentary writing - it will come as a farewell to childhood, a new beginning for Rusber, whatever path he decides to take.





DIRECTING INTENTIONS

FILMING A RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

At a time of major ecological upheavals, systemic crises and the erosion of biodiversity, questioning our relationship with living beings has become a necessity. But I have no desire to do so in a didactic or theoretical way. This film will not be a manifesto for animal protection, nor will it adopt the guilt-inducing tone of most environmental films, if that is a genre at all. The films I identify with base their ability to question the world on the suggestive power of a cinematic language that dispenses with specialist discourse and additional commentary. They rely on a grammar that tends towards an economy of shots, attentive to frame and sound in order to highlight a protagonist who forges his future through the encounters he makes and the trials he undergoes.

I was immediately drawn to Rusber's story precisely because, through an intimate, embodied narrative, it reveals and challenges the most fundamental oppositions in our relationship with living beings: humanity/animality, wild/domestic, protection/exploitation.

From then on, the aim was to follow Rusber's adventures in a setting that played on the similarities and oppositions between forest and city, apes and humans, cages and houses. This translates first and foremost into a certain freedom to film. I want to allow myself to move from a mobile camera, sensitive to the ups and downs of Rusber's life, to impressionistic breaths that give

the environments he passes through time to settle into the viewer's perceptive space. The choice of 1.85 as the image ratio is also a step in this direction, as it takes us back to a landscape iconography inseparable from the idea of nature as an objectified, delimited entity, liable to be protected or exploited. In the same vein, the digital medium is essential both because of a limited shooting economy and because it corresponds to a certain technology of modernity.

Formally, there will be two main motifs: the city and the shelter, like the two inseparable sides of modernity's relationship with nature, which has made human beings the managers - sometimes benevolent, sometimes hostile - of nature and its inhabitants. As he navigates between these two poles, Rusber will be led to question his past, his relationship with the apes and the possibility of following paths other than the one mapped out by Nena.

From one shelter to another: where freedom come through confinement

Whether at Machia or Jacj Cuisi, the shelters' spatial organization follows a similar pattern. On the edge of the forest is the base camp, with the administration office, workers' accommodation and canteen. This is also the starting point for the primates' rehabilitation itinerary, with the veterinary clinic where they are examined on arrival, and the quarantine, where they are placed for observation to assess their potential for reintroduction. In quarantine, we also find the broken-mouths, the monkeys most accustomed to human contact, for whom the possibility of ever being released is virtually nil. They live permanently in individual cages. Added to this is a preoccupation with hygiene that sometimes becomes absurd given the ambient humidity. The promiscuity and artificiality of this space, the size of the enclosures, the animals' cries and the noise of the metal they shake at the slightest excitement give the quarantine a prison-like atmosphere.

The reintroduction areas can only be found in the higher reaches of the forest. Around a central clearing, enclosures are set aside to accommodate any new arrivals. They stay there for varying lengths of time, so that the rest of the free-ranging group can get used to their presence. Long cables stretched between the trees, to which the animals are attached by lanyards, provide a further level of autonomy after the cage. Finally, if the conditions are right and the group accepts them, they can be completely freed from their constraints. All are nevertheless dependent on humans for their food, who distribute daily portions of fruit and vegetables via aluminum trays hoisted into the branches of the trees, or slid inside the cages.

This hybrid universe is Rusber's garden. When he's there, like a little prince in his kingdom of bric-a-brac, he spends his days navigating a labyrinth of forests and cages, providing for the monkeys and improving their daily lives, along with the other shelter workers. It's these everyday situations that pro-

vide the raw material for the film. That's why, when shooting the film, I want to follow Rusber's movements as closely as possible, to bring the viewer into his wake, so that he can discover the shelter's different areas through his progress and the adventures that animate Rusber's hours of work with the primates, throughout the day and sometimes even at night.

As he works, the framing of cages, forests and animals will underline the paradoxical essence of places that protect as much as they enclose, and the tension between Rusber's commitment and desire to be elsewhere. When he is in quarantine, for example, the use of mesh as a lead-in, a tight frame and the absence of a horizon all contribute to a sense of confinement. On the contrary, in the heights of the forest, wide shots of Rusber climbing the treetops provide a sense of freedom.

In Machia, we'll focus on sequences shot between dog and wolf, using fog and tropical rains to give the viewer the feeling of a world gradually unravelling, and to tint the story with the same nostalgia that Rusber and Nena feel when they talk of their departure. In contrast, the images shot in Jacj Cuisi on sunny days give way to brighter sequences, conveying the same hope that this new, albeit fragile, place represents.

The monkeys: between caring gestures and camera glances

Sometimes quasi-human, sometimes wild beasts, it's always been the monkeys that most effectively raise the question of human distinction. Between the capuchins and the ateles, over a hundred of them inhabit the two shelters in different conditions of autonomy, and human life evolves around their needs.



Signifying this closeness means paying attention to the details of the caretaker's job: cleaning, feeding, caring, repairing, and to the monkeys who receive this care. Using a long focal length, the aim is to encourage concrete points of contact between the two species: glances that meet, hands that touch, the close sounds of monkeys breathing heavily, eating and whistling. The aim of these sequences is to make the viewer feel that gestures repeated daily are the basis of the bond between Rusber and the monkeys.

This closeness can also be felt in the discussions that enliven life at the refuge. When Rusber and the volunteers are working, for example. The cages that serve as their workshops are particularly good places for spontaneous conversation: anecdotes about a particular animal, questions about the behavior of another, will enable us to find out more about Miki, Sterling, Pambo, Marucha and the others. If the opportunity arises, we can also follow part of the rehabilitation process of a particular monkey. But it's above all through the multiplication of situations and individualities that we'll get the measure of the diversity of simian personalities and stories.

Another way of understanding their stories will be through the regular use of frontal still shots, showing the apes and their various conditions of rehabilitation. There will be no idealization in this portrait series, and at no point will we attempt to hide the captivity devices or the physical and psychological scars of the apes. On the contrary, we rely on their suggestive power. A cage, a collar around the neck, a mutilated body are enough to tell their story, without the need to go into sometimes sordid detail.

Finally, we'll be playing with the camera's gaze to engage the viewer. The effect of the monkey's gaze is a recurring theme in the stories of those who encounter it. Nena, for example, readily recounts the precise memory of the day she broke down in tears as she caught the imploring eyes of a female ape. According to her, it was through this gaze that she first experienced the full emotional spectrum of these animals, and decided to dedicate her life to them. The challenge is precisely to enable viewers to experience this kindred otherness, and to make them question their own humanity.

Finally, other images of monkeys punctuate the scenes in which Rusber travels, in a more experimental register. With a plastic treatment that distinguishes them from the others, through a play on shutter speed for example, or the use of filters, they will appear superimposed on images of the forest and the road. When Rusber falls asleep at the back of the bus, they will accompany him in his thoughts and visually signify the blurring of boundaries between the worlds he crosses.

The city or cosmopolitan mirages

As the film's second major motif, the urban environment of the cities Rusber passes through on his way to class or to visit friends is also used for its ambivalent nature. There, far from the shelter and its constraints, Rusber can experience a certain kind of independence, meet friends, party and explore other possible futures than the one he seems destined for. At the same time, he has to face up to the harsh economic reality that weighs down on Bolivia's youth and his dreams of elsewhere. What's more, during his university courses, while learning his trade with livestock, Rusber must confront his own ethical convictions with those of agribusiness.

In contrast to the shelter, where Rusber is in his element, the city is conceived as a space of solitude, despite its teeming character.

The aim is to isolate Rusber in the mass and tumult of the city, whether he's at university, playing pool or soccer with friends, or walking the streets. Using settings in which Rusber is as much part of a group as possible (the students, his friends, the crowd on the street), or in a listening position (facing the teacher, the guidance counselor), the challenge is to bring out his fragile, still childlike side.



PROVOKED BUT FREE SPEECH

The fact that I don't want to intervene as a character in the film means that Rusber's words have to emerge, without my direct intervention during the shots. To this end, I intend to stage exchanges, both inside and outside the shelter, with a few people I've already identified, who will enable me to put Rusber in a situation of reflexivity. In order to guide the discussions, prior to the shooting of the various sequences, I will separately inform Rusber and his interlocutors of the subjects and issues I would like them to address, while leaving them sufficient leeway not to constrain their spontaneity.

Technical scouting with the team in February 2023 enabled me to put this system to the test and verify its efficiency. Above all, I was able to testify to Rusber's availability and his commitment to the film's intentions: an ethical as well as an artistic condition for its realization.

Outside shooting, he asks the technical crew a lot of questions, he's very interested in the camera, and I can tell he likes having it pointed at him. He and I talk a lot beforehand about each sequence we're about to shoot. I let him know my intentions and the themes I want him to tackle, depending on the person he's facing and the location he's in. If I'm going about things the wrong way, or if he doesn't feel comfortable talking about his past, for example, he doesn't hesitate to tell me. In such cases, we try together to approach the subject in a less frontal way, or to find another direction for the scene.

Once the frame is set and the recording begins, the first few minutes are usually tinged with nervousness and communication. You have to wait, cut, rediscuss, move the camera, then start again. Once the official speech is over, the technical team and the camera seem to disappear little by little, and bodies and tongues relax. Then, when we have each exhausted the reservoir of our respective expectations, sometimes after a few minutes, sometimes after several hours, a truth emerges that surpasses and sublimates the initial intention of the sequence.

It is then, that through the mesh of a cage, the tone of Nena's reply to Rusber reveals the cracks in her armor; that in the silence that follows Eve's "I miss you" to Rusber on the phone, we grasp the distance that separates them; that in the anecdote about his childhood dreams, Rusber's entire journey is captured.

Talking to the camera alone

Finally, I won't prevent myself from also eliciting and capturing Rusber's speech alone, in his student room or at the shelter, in a part of the forest that is being emptied of the installations and traces of his childhood. We'll then plunge into the character's intimacy, into his inner thoughts and words.

SOUND TO BLUR THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORLDS

Rusber's soundscape is particularly rich. In the shelter in particular, it mixes the high-pitched whistling of the capuchins with the clinking of the aluminum dishes they manipulate to feed themselves; the guttural vocalizations of the ateles with the creaking of the branches on which they move. Depending on where you are in the forest, the deafening hum of swarms of insects is punctuated by the rhythms of the city, which rise in the distance. In Machia, the immediate proximity of the road means that, day and night, you have to raise your voice to make yourself audible over the steady beat of the trucks. Whereas in Jacj Cuisi, the nocturnal symphony of the rainforest shrouds evenings without electricity in a peaceful veil. These different levels of sonic complexity oblige us to use certain recording devices as much as they open up possibilities for accompanying, underlining and sometimes transcending the different environments and emotional states Rusber goes through in the film.

For direct sound, the use of a shotgun microphone is essential, particularly to capture the subtleties of monkey sounds from a distance: their breathing, chewing, whistling sounds of pleasure or alarm calls. But as the saying goes, in the forest you hear before you see. Indeed, the thick tropical vegetation and the multiplication of green tones make it difficult to find your way around by sight alone, requiring you to listen 360°. What's more, human presence tends to disturb or silence certain animals otherwise inclined to enliven the environment with their song. Under these conditions, two ambient recording devices seem to be interesting ways of capturing the invisible sounds of the rainforest.

Audio-naturalists in particular have been using audio traps for several years to capture the sounds of animals in their absence. For the purposes of the film, a box such as the SM4 Wildlife Acoustics can be left in at night, to record when the forest sound environment is richest. Secondly, an ambisonic microphone can be used to produce soundtracks that enhance the direct directional sound and immerse the viewer in the rainforest.

The urban sound environment can be treated in the same way. For example, the roar of old buses, the ranting of street vendors and the beat of Latino music that punctuates Bolivian public spaces can be reproduced in all their colors. When editing, it will be interesting to mix the songs of the forest with those of the city, to reflect the sonic hybridity in which Rusber is constantly evolving.

Music is sometimes used to support this hybridization process. I'm particularly interested in artists from the South American new wave, a musical genre that blends electronic rhythms and compositions with Andean and Amazonian sounds. Composers and producers sometimes use sounds from the forest, birds or other animals, which they sample and transform to create their melodies.

THE ROAD AS A SPACE FOR POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Finally, linking the two opposite but complementary poles of the story - the shelters and the city - the road will appear from two angles. On the one hand, the construction sites will visualize the threat to Machia and convey the urgency of its relocation. To the east of the shelter, several sections of highway have already been completed. To the west, in the direction of Cochabamba, construction work is encountering Dantean conditions due to Andean foothills, rainfall and tropical vegetation. Taking the old road, which by necessity is still in service, we wind our way along unfinished sections, where the bulldozers and the men operating them seem to be engaged in a relentless battle with the forest and the elements.

On the other hand, during Rusber's journeys in overloaded minibuses, the roadsides dotted with makeshift houses painted with slogans will bear witness to a Bolivian political situation in turmoil. When he falls asleep to dream of the monkeys, I'll film the avenues teeming with trucks, motorcycle cabs and street vendors who emerge in the headlights, before disappearing into the darkness of a Bolivian night populated by a whole fauna of cows, caimans and capybaras. Thus, without trying to force the metaphor, paying attention to this chaotic road is of course a way of being sensitive to the journey of a young man at a cross-roads, in a country where political decisions on ecology and development are directly drawn upon landscapes of tropical forest.



CV OF WRITER-DIRECTOR

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MASTER OF ANTHROPOLOGY - 2015-2017
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DIPLOMA IN ASSISTANT FILMMAKING - 2006-2009
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AUDIOVISUAL & LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

DIRECTOR, CAMERA OPERATOR

SHARING PRODUCTIONS - GREAT PICTURES PRODUCTIONS - PANPAN FILMS

Documentaries, live performances, music videos

LIGHTING OPERATOR 2013-2015

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PUBLICATIONS

2023

"Exploring the jungle with pumas. A paradoxical ontological experience".

Cahiers de recherches sociologiques [Conceiving what exists - Non-human subjectivities in the social sciences], 69

2021

"From wildlife safaris in Bolivia to ethical selfies on social networks".

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2020

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2020

"Animals in ethnography. What methods of investigation, what ethical postures? Paris - November 21 and 22, 2019. Conference report "

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FUNDING, SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS

BROUILLON D'UN RÊVE" DOCUMENTARY WRITING GRANT

SCAM, March 2022 Commission

CNU QUALIFICATION - SECTION 20 BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, ETHNOLOGY, PREHISTORY

Session de Décembre 2021

Grade de Maître de conférences

THESIS AWARD

UNIVERSITÉ LUMIÈRE LYON 2, Winner 2021

TILLION-RIVIÈRE THESIS PRIZE

ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE D'ETHNOLOGIE ET D'ANTHROPOLOGIE, Laureate 2021

DOCTORAL GRANT

UNIVERSITÉ LUMIÈRE LYON II, 2017-2020

The audiovisual and film production company was co-founded by Frédéric Bongrain and Elisa Benoist, building on her 25 years of experience in the sector.

The company's aim is to work with talent from its Paris region base, to discover new talent in other regions, particularly in the South of France, where it is based, and to expand internationally. In short: to serve a variety of points of view. **Its desire:** to participate in the emergence of new writing and aesthetics.

In its desire **to create works that are open to the world**, and against a backdrop of globalisation in audiovisual and film production, in 2022 the team joined forces with Benjamin Laurent and Nadège Lobato de Faria to develop foreign co-productions of feature films, documentaries and dramas.

Sharing Productions produced its first feature-length documentary for television: *L'abri* by Marie-Elise Beyne (2022 - 74' - Vosges TV, CNC, Fonds Images de la Diversité, Procirep-Angoa, Département du Gard, Proarti) and continues to develop documentaries as well as feature-length fiction films in France (*Socrates* by Nader T.



Elisa Benoist discovered documentaries in cinemas in 1995 with Denis Gheerbrant's *La vie est immense et pleine de dangers* and Marcel Ophüls' *Veillées d'armes*. It was a revelation. A literary and film buff, she decided to train in this field and assisted a producer in the development, financing and production of some sixty films, notably African films by Mahamat Saleh Haroun.

In 2002 she began directing at Ateliers Varan, before moving on to become a production manager at Avenue B Productions.

She works with directors from both the fiction and documentary worlds and has a passion for strong, true stories told in cinematic language.

For 15 years, Elisa has worked in various structures (Avenue B, Agat Films, Roche Productions, BBC Studios, Schuch Productions, Rouge International, Gaumont TV, among others) producing international films for television, cinema and SVOD platforms - for example: *Les rois de l'arnaque* (Netflix), *Les joueuses* #paslàpourdanser (cinema), *Graines d'étoiles*, *5 ans après* (Arte), *Daft Punk Unchained* (Canal+).